



Guidance

National Leaders of Governance for further education: guidance for applicants

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1. Overview

National Leaders of Governance (NLGs) are experienced college governors or clerks with a strong record of supporting college improvement. They provide mentoring and peer-to-peer support to further education (FE) and sixth form colleges where governance needs to be improved.

The work of NLGs links with that of the FE Commissioner's team and the [National Leaders of FE \(NLFE\) programme](#) to create a support package for college improvement.

2. The role of an NLG

NLGs support college improvement by working with a college board of governors. In some cases they work in partnership with an NLFE or other improvement partner.

The role of an NLG includes:

- diagnosing and reviewing governance improvement needs
- assisting the board of governors to draw up an improvement plan
- developing the capacity and expertise of the board of governors

- proving support and advice
- coaching and mentoring
- identifying additional and ongoing sources of support

NLGs generally work with colleges that have:

- been recommended governance support following a diagnostic assessment or formal intervention assessment visit from the FE Commissioner's team
- received an Ofsted rating of 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' – this could be for 'overall effectiveness' or 'leadership and management'

3. Time commitment and reporting

NLGs are expected to provide around 50 days of support over the course of an academic year, subject to demand. The length of each assignment will vary. There is no guarantee over how many days work each NLG will be offered.

NLGs are required to provide updates on their work and a short case study at the end of each assignment.

4. Eligibility

You must be a serving chair of governors or a governor or clerk at a college rated 'good' or 'outstanding' for 'overall effectiveness' and 'leadership and management' in the most recent Ofsted inspection report. The college must not subject to formal FE Commissioner intervention.

You should:

- be able to demonstrate a track record of college improvement
- be able to demonstrate effective governance
- have experience in coaching and mentoring to improve
- have strong financial literacy
- have experience in leading or supporting change management

Applicants will need to demonstrate good written and verbal communication skills.

NLGs need to comply with the [7 principles of public life](#).

5. Payment

NLGs will receive a payment of £300 a day plus expenses.

Payment for any work beyond that funded by the DfE will need to be agreed between the NLG and supported college.

6. Assessment process

Applications will be subject to a rigorous assessment process based on the assessment criteria set out below. It will review candidates' skills, expertise and track record, as well as Ofsted inspection reports and data that DfE and ESFA already hold on institutions the applicant has served.

Short-listed candidates will be invited to an assessment day that will include a scenario-based exercise and a formal interview.

Other factors relevant to the objectives of the NLG programme will be considered. These may include the need for a balanced geographical distribution and for a range of experience across the NLG cohort that matches the likely improvement needs of colleges within the sector.

7. Assessment criteria

Candidates will need to demonstrate evidence of their experience, knowledge and skills in the following areas.

7.1 Supporting college improvement

Setting strategic direction

- establishing a clear vision and ethos, and engaging stakeholders
- understanding the broader context of the local community and employer needs
- regularly reviewing organisation aims and sustainability

Monitoring performance and benchmarking

- ensuring clear and robust plans are in place and understood by all
- agreeing monitoring and evaluation strategies
- actively managing risks

Process implementation, operation and reform

- identifying where change is needed
- managing change effectively
- operating in an open and transparent way

7.2 Building capacity within the college board of governors

Accountability, scrutiny and challenge

- setting a strong staffing structure within the college and board of governors, with clear lines of accountability
- providing healthy challenge and support, asking difficult questions where needed
- establishing robust processes for self-assessment and external assurance

Financial management, data skills and decision-making

- ensuring strong financial management, budget-setting and forecasting
- ensuring good estate and asset-management and effective allocation of resources
- interpreting learner data and local demographics, and making evidence-based decisions

Staffing and relationship management

- working positively with the college principal and senior management team
- making strong appointments and conducting succession planning where needed
- communicating effectively with internal and external stakeholders

7.3 Coaching and mentoring

Leadership and communication skills

- communicating in a clear and engaging way, actively listening and ensuring all voices are heard
- setting behavioural policy and leading by way of example
- promoting and upholding a diverse and inclusive working environment

Self-assessment and identifying training needs

- evaluating development needs within the college board of governors
- ensuring comprehensive inductions for new starters and access to training opportunities for all
- ensuring the board has the right mix of skills, knowledge and experience

Building capability for others

- setting clear roles and responsibilities within the college board of governors, and towards the wider community and other stakeholders
- demonstrating collective responsibility and providing support for colleagues
- understanding charity law and the duties and responsibilities of trustees

8. Appointment length

NLGs are initially appointed for 2 years and will have the opportunity to re-apply.

9. Apply

The first application round has closed and appointments are detailed on [National Leaders of Governance for further education: national leaders](#). To register an interest in applying to become an NLG, please email FE.leaders@education.gov.uk.

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